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fits into a cylindrical hole which penetrates perpendicularly to a depth of 2–3^{mm} the hinder portion of the object-carrier. Within this hole the holder can be turned, or moved up or down; and these movements, together with those which may be given to the rod (*r*) and the spring (*s*), are ample for all adjustments of the weight (*w*).

Preparatory to cutting, the weight should be turned so as to be parallel with the edge of the knife, and raised or lowered by means of the rod (*r*) and the holder (*k*) until it rests *lightly* on the upper surface of the paraffine. Slight changes in the pressure of the weight can be made through the rod (*r*); greater changes can be effected by bending the spring.

The weight should rest, not directly over the object, but on the edge of the paraffine next to the knife.

This section-smoother, which can be fitted to any sliding microtome, can be obtained of Fr. Fasching, in Graz, Bügergasse, No. 13, at a price of 3½ marks, or $0.85.

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SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

— Some Gossip about Darwin.—In a recent visit to England, the writer strolled into the village of Down in Kent, and talked with some of the villagers in regard to Mr. Darwin, whose beautiful home is just outside the little town.

Some of this talk, although in itself idle and valueless, may have an interest to readers, as showing how a great man looks to his smaller neighbors.

The landlord of the "George Inn" said that "all the people wished to have Mr. Darwin buried in Down, but the government would not let them. It would have helped the place so much. It would have brought hosts of people down to see his grave. Especially it would have helped the hotel business which is pretty dull in winter time.

"Mr. Darwin was a very fine-looking man. He had a high forehead and wore a long beard. Still, if you had met him on the street, perhaps, you would not have taken much notice of him unless you knew that he was a clever man."

"Sir John Lubbock (Darwin's friend and near neighbor) is a very clever man, too, but not so clever nor so remarkable-looking as Mr. Darwin. He is very fond of hants (ants) and plants and things."

At Keston, three miles from Down, the landlady of the Greyhound had never heard of Mr. Darwin until after his death. There was then considerable talk about his being buried in Westminster, but nothing was said of him before.

Several persons had considerable to say of Mr. Darwin's extensive and judicious charity to the poor. To Mr. Parslow, for many years his personal servant, Mr. Darwin gave a life pension of £50, and the rent of the handsome "Home Cottage" in Down. During the time of a water famine in that region, he used to ride about on horseback to see who needed water, and had it brought to them at his own expense from the stream at St. Mary's Cray.

"He was," said Mr. Parslow, "a very social, nice sort of a gentleman, very joking and jolly indeed; a good husband and a good father and a most excellent master. Even his footmen used to stay with him as long as five years. They would rather stay with him than take a higher salary somewhere else. The cook came there while young and stayed there till his death, nearly thirty years later.

"Mrs. Darwin is a pleasant lady, a year older than her husband. Their boys are all jolly, nice young fellows. All have turned out so well, not one of them rackety, you know. Seven children out of the ten are now living.

"George Darwin is now a professor in Oxford. He was a barrister at first; had his wig and gown and all, but had to give it up on account of bad health. He would have made a hornament to the profession.

"Francis Darwin is a doctor, and used to work with his father in the greenhouse. He is soon to marry a lady who lectures on Botany in Oxford.

"For the first twenty years after Mr. Darwin's return from South America, his health was very bad—much more than later. He had a stomach disease which resulted from sea-sickness while on the voyage around the world. Mr. Parslow learned the water-cure treatment and treated Mr. Darwin in that system, for a long time, giving much relief.

"Mr. Darwin used to do his own writing but had copyists to get his work ready for the printer. He was always an early man. He used to get up at half past six. He used to bathe and then go out for a walk all around the place. Then Parslow used to get breakfast for him before the rest of the family came down. He used to eat rapidly, then went to his study and wrote till after the rest had breakfast. Then Mrs. Darwin came in and he used to lie half an hour on the sofa while she or some one else read to him. Then he wrote till noon, then went out for an hour to walk. He used to walk all around the place. Later in life, he had a cab, and used to ride on horseback. Then after lunch at one, he used to write awhile. Afterwards he and Mrs. Darwin used to go to the bedroom, where he lay on a sofa and often smoked a cigarette while she read to him. After this he used to walk till dinner-time at five. Before the family grew up, they used to dine early, at half-past one, and had a meat-tea at half-past six.

"Sometimes there were eighteen or twenty young Darwins of different families in the house. Four-in-hand coaches of young

Darwins used sometimes to come down from London. Mr. Darwin liked children. They didn't disturb him in the least. There were sometimes twenty or thirty pairs of little shoes to be cleaned of a morning, but there were always plenty of servants to do this.

"The gardener used to bring plants into his room often of a morning, and he used to tie bits of cotton on them, and try to make them do things. He used to try all sorts of seeds. He would sow them in pots in his study.

"There were a quantity of people in Westminster Abbey when he was buried. Mr. Parslow and the cook were among the chief mourners and sat in the Jerusalem chamber. The whole church was as full of people as they could stand. There was great disappointment in Down that he was not buried there. He loved the place, and we think that he would rather have rested there had he been consulted."—*David S. Jordan*, *Bloomington*, *Indiana.*

— Sir A. Henry Layard, in his "Nineveh and Babylon" describes a lens which he found in the course of his excavations, and which is now in the British Museum. By the kind permission of Dr. Birch, the keeper of Oriental Antiquities, the Journal of the Royal Microscopical Society has been enabled to figure it. The lens is thus referred to by Sir A. H. Layard: "With the glass bowls was discovered a rock crystal lens, with opposite convex and plane faces. Its properties could hardly have been unknown to the Assyrians, and we have consequently the earliest specimen of a magnifying and burning glass. It was buried beneath a heap of fragments of beautiful blue opaque glass, apparently the enamel of some object in ivory or wood, which had perished.

A note from Sir David Brewster, quoted by Layard, ends as follows: "It is obvious from the shape and rude cutting of the lens that it could not have been intended as an ornament. We are entitled, therefore, to consider it as intended to be used as a lens, either for magnifying or for contracting the rays of the sun, which it does, however, very imperfectly."

— A monograph of the North American fresh-water sponges is now in course of preparation by Mr. Edward Potts. The best season for collecting sponges varies with the different species, but may be generally stated to be from the last of July to the middle or latter part of November, when the spicules and statospheres are likely to be fully matured. They may be preserved in dilute alcohol or dried by a few days' exposure to the air; in which condition Mr. Potts would be very happy to receive specimens from all parts of this and other countries. If packed in light boxes, strong enough to prevent crushing, the postage by mail (4th class) will be but one cent per ounce, which Mr. Potts will gladly repay, with any other reasonable expenses. He will acknowledge their receipt, giving the names of known species and full credit to the collectors of all that are novel or interesting. Every gathering should be marked with its habitat, the date of collection, and the name and address of the sender. Address specimens and letters to Edward Potts, 228 S. Third street, Philadelphia.

—We are glad to learn, that Dr. Shufeldt of the army is about to resume his scientific work at the Army Medical Museum of Washington. It is the intention of the recently appointed Surgeon-General, General Robert Murray, U. S. Army, to place Dr. Shufeldt in the position he formerly held in that institution, and his duties in that field will commence at an early date.

Dr. Shufeldt has during the year just past made very extensive collections of vertebrates and invertebrates in the southern part of the State of Louisiana. This collection amounted to some 3000 specimens, and coming as they do from a section of our country so little known and worked by the naturalist, they are particularly valuable. It is to be sincerely hoped that Dr. Shufeldt will be enabled to work up his collection, and duly give us a report upon the zoölogy of the section in question.

— Charles Leslie McKay, U. S. Signal Officer at Nushegak, Alaska, was drowned in Bristol bay, last April, while on a collecting excursion. Mr. McKay was engaged in a zoölogical survey of the Bristol Bay region under the auspices of the National Museum, and had already sent in important collections. He was one of the most active of the younger naturalists, having given especial attention to Ichthyology. His only scientific publication is a review of the *Centrarchidæ*, in the Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. for 1881. This paper was an abridgment of a detailed monograph, the manuscripts of which have been destroyed by the burning of the museum of the Indiana university. Mr. McKay was a native of Wisconsin, a graduate of Indiana university, 26 years of age and unmarried.—*D. S. J.*

— In the recent death of Dr. W. Kowalevsky, palæontological science has lost one of its most able cultivators. He was professor in the University of Moscow, and was of the purest and most advanced Muscovitic stock. His contributions to vertebrate palæontology mostly appeared in the German Palæontographica, and were of a high order of excellence. He anticipated several English and American writers in several generalizations as to the descent of the ungulate Mammalia, among the rest in the genealogy of the horses.

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PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

Biological Society of Washington, Nov. 30.—Communications were made by Dr. Frank Baker on the logical method of